

Lewis the Agent of the Capitalists

By JOHN PEPPER.

Why are hundreds of thousands of miners members of the United Miners of America?

They want higher wages, shorter hours of work, and better labor conditions.

They want to live as human beings, to have dwelling places fit for human beings, to buy clothes for their wives and assure the future of their children. The miners are members of the union because they know that the individual workingman separated from his fellow workers is a slave of the capitalists, and is subjected to every caprice of the corporations.

But higher wages and a shorter working day—are these sufficient for the miners? Does not the miner require some protection against unemployment and some provision for his old age? Is he satisfied to see his children after a few years of school going to the mines in their childhood to continue his work of slavery for another generation?

The mine workers know that they need more than simply higher wages and shorter hours, that they must free themselves from the exploitation of the big coal barons. It is for this reason that the miners favor the nationalization of mines.

And the mine workers know that driving the coal barons from the mines, that nationalization, is impossible if the working-class has no political weapon for carrying out this nationalization or for protection against the greed of the capitalists when this nationalization is put into effect. And that is why the miners are for an independent political party of the workers, for a labor party.

The mine workers who always were militant and revolutionary know that they can make their lives happy as well as the lives of their wives and children if they shake off capitalist exploitation; if they fight, not only for higher wages and shorter hours, but for establishing the rule of the working class.

The United Mine Workers is the most radical and most advanced trade union in the United States. The conventions of the mine workers' union have gone on record for nationalization and for a labor party.

Nothing, thrice nothing!

But in practice, what has the United Mine Workers done for nationalization and a labor party?

Why? What is the reason that the hundreds of thousands of mine workers want nationalization, a labor party, alliance with railroad workers, and an international alliance with the miners of other countries, and that they decided all this in conventions of their union, and yet everything remains on paper, while the union itself does not fight at all for these demands of the members?

What is the reason that in spite of the fact that the mine workers hate the capitalists and that a convention of miners decided that officials of the union must not work together with the most reactionary capitalists—with the National Civic

Federation, and yet Lewis and other officials of the union recently entered into secret conspiracies with these worst of American capitalists?

The reason for all this is that the United Mine Workers of America is not in the hands of the workers, but in the hands of the mighty machine of Lewis and other officials.

The reason for all this is that the powerful Lewis machine, despite that it was elected by the workers, is not an agent of the workers against the capitalists, but an agent of the capitalists against the workers.

The Lewis machine is but a part, on the one hand, of the capitalist National Coal Association and on the other hand, a department of the capitalist government.

Lewis was elected as president of the United Mine Workers through the aid of the capitalists, and he is thankful. In every strike until now he has betrayed the workers in favor of the capitalists.

Lewis sees that he cannot retain his power in the union, that his machine is endangered by the dissatisfied miners, and he is calling the state power to his help. And the Department of Justice comes to his aid, giving him fake material against the Reds. Lewis does what no labor leader before has so shamelessly and so openly done. He accuses the miners of Herrin, and the miners who participated in the march of West Virginia of being murderers and robbers—and Communists. Even his friend, Farrington, who is himself a reactionary, threw at his face the words, "Damnable liar!" Hundreds of thousands of mine workers today throw at his face, "Damnable liar!"

How long will the mine workers tolerate the rule of the National Coal Association and the Department of Justice over the United Mine Workers within the United Mine Workers? How long will they tolerate the Lewis machine?

The mine workers will lose every strike! The cause of nationalization will never advance! The labor party will never be organized! The exploitation of the capitalists will never be overthrown!—so long as the hundreds of thousands of mine workers will tolerate the Czarist rule of a few scores of officials, the rule of the Lewis machine.

We turn to the workers and say to them: "Do you want a better life for you and for your wives and children?"

Do you want to provide for your old age?

Do you want to reduce the accidents in the mines?

Do you want a labor party of the working class?

Do you want an alliance with the railroad workers and miners of other countries?

Do you want nationalization of mines?

Do you want the abolition of capitalist exploitation and in its stead the rule of workers and farmers?

Then you must overthrow the Lewis machine at the January convention of the mine workers.